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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2004

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HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Ankara confused by heavy conditions in EU draft - Milliyet
US advises Nicosia not to veto EU-Turkey talks - Hurriyet
Netherlands puts PKK on list of terrorist organizations - Sabah
CIA: Situation worsening in Iraq - Star
Reserves flee US army - Aksam
US Dollar hits bottom - Aksam
Erdogan celebrates Turkish Jews' Hanukkah - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS

Turkey, Russia take a new look at the Caucasus - Cumhuriyet
Moscow worries about Chechens, Ankara about PKK - Cumhuriyet
Turkish leadership to EU: No concessions - Yeni Safak
German, French conservatives want 'privileged partnership'
for Turkey - Cumhuriyet
Athens, Nicosia say second EU draft for Turkey talks
'insufficient' - Radikal
US warns Nicosia against vetoing Turkey - Zaman
US conscripts 'reluctant' to go to Iraq - Radikal
Afghanistan's first president-elect Karzai takes office - Zaman
US, China have aided Pinochet - Cumhuriyet

BRIEFING

Turkey uneasy over new EU draft: Ankara said on Tuesday that the European Union should open accession talks without setting any fresh conditions. A statement from the presidency following a meeting of PM Erdogan, President Sezer, FM Gul and Chief of Staff General Ozkok noted that Turkey had already fulfilled the political conditions set by the European bloc. The statement said that the EU must keep the commitment it made in 1999 to open full membership talks if Turkey met EU criteria on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU set out a series of tough conditions for Turkey, and warned that the process will take at least a decade and is not guaranteed to result in full EU membership. A new draft warns that the EU must be sure it has the capacity to 'absorb' Turkey before it can decide on admission. The latest version also underlines the need for the European Commission to monitor reforms by Turkey if it is granted a date for entry talks. It also singles out torture as a key point of concern that should be closely monitored. On Tuesday, FM Gul and Dutch European affairs minister Atzo Nikolai, whose country currently chairs the rotating EU presidency, discussed the draft in Ankara. Papers expect negotiations between Turkey and the EU on the final wording of the decision to continue until the very last moment at the December 17 summit in Brussels.

Ankara discusses PKK, Chechens with Russians: Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said in Ankara on Tuesday that Russia is examining Turkish demands to put the separatist Kurdish group PKK on its list of terrorist organizations. Ivanov also said he expects Ankara to back efforts to curb foreign support for Chechen separatists. Moscow has accused Ankara of failing to prevent Turkish nationals from joining and assisting Chechen rebel groups. During a landmark visit to Turkey on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked Ankara for supporting Moscow's struggle against terrorism. Ivanov said that Moscow expected further efforts from Turkey in capturing people suspected of backing Chechen separatists. On the other hand, "Yeni Safak" claims on its front page that the two sides have agreed to take Russian oil to the Mediterranean via a pipeline to be built between Turkey's Black Sea province Samsun and Ceyhan, a coastal town in the south.
No freedom for religious minorities in Turkey: "Cumhuriyet"

reports from Frankfurt, Germany about restrictions on religious freedom for Christians and Alevis in Turkey. Father Felix Korner, who preaches at the Jesuit St. Therese Church in Ankara, said police used to take photographs inside the church at prayer times in their search for 'extraordinary' activities. Churches have no legal status in Turkey, Korner said, and added that constitutional religious freedom was practically ineffective. The head of the German Evangelical Church Council, Wolfgang Huber, pointed to the difficulties encountered by devout people of all religions in Turkey: 'Muslims in EU countries enjoy religious freedom, but Christians in Turkey do not,' Huber said, adding that Europe's biggest mosque had been built in Rotterdam, while not a single church has been built in Turkey for decades. "Cumhuriyet" also cites Amnesty International (AI) as blaming the Turkish government for providing financial support exclusively to Turkey's Sunni Muslims. 'Other religions cannot speak their own languages, and are not allowed to build or repair their churches,' AI emphasized.

Demonstrators protest prison conditions: Turkish protesters demonstrating against prison conditions Tuesday clashed with police in Ankara. Demonstrators threw stones at police, who used tear gas to disperse them. Police detained 30 protesters. Under the so-called F-Type prison system approved in 2000, prison cells for one or three inmates replaced large dormitories where revolts and hostage-takings used to occur frequently.

Russians complain about 'Gulen schools': At talks with Turkish officials during President Putin's visit to Ankara earlier this week, Russian officials complained to their Turkish counterparts about the schools established by Fethullah Gulen (Fettullah Hoca) in the Russian Federation and some Central Asian countries, "Cumhuriyet" reports. The Russians claimed that the Gulen schools are carrying out Islamist, anti-Russian and Pan-Turkic propaganda, causing significant problems in the region, diplomatic sources told "Cumhuriyet." Moscow has been trying various ways to restrict the activities of those schools, the paper claims.

Minister Aksu denies claims of US help for PKK: In response to a motion submitted by the opposition CHP, Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu said at the parliament on Tuesday that there is no evidence to verify claims that the US is helping the outlawed PKK in northern Iraq. Aksu added that he would not expect the US to act against Turkey's interests.

US to deport PKK member: The US is preparing to deport former PKK member Ibrahim Parlak, papers report. Parlak had earlier served a prison term in Turkey on charges of killing two soldiers along Turkey's border with Syria in 1988. When released, Parlak went to the US and applied for permanent residency status based on false statements. A US court ordered Parlak arrested last July following a Turkish court decision to authorize a retrial.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Putin Visit, Criticizing the US
"Close Relations With Russia, Cold Shoulder For the West"
Sami Kohen observed in the mass appeal "Milliyet" (12/8):
"Putin's visit to Turkey coincided with a period when Turkey-West relations are rather tense. Turkey's warm stance toward Russia and distant position with regard to Europe and the US seems rather contradictory. The anti-American atmosphere in Turkey, in particular, has come to the level that it could affect Turkish-American relations negatively. The most relevant factors here are the reactions to US policies in Iraq, especially Northern Iraq and the PKK. These reactions have spread from the streets to the AKP and other politicians. Moreover, the latest 'crisis' over the ecumenical nature of the Patriarchate has further increased negative feelings toward the US. As December 17 approaches, there are also certain difficulties in Turkey's relationship with Europe. Although Putin's visit at this problematic time may comfort some in Turkey, one should never consider this as an alternative to existing relations with the West. Giving considering to 'running away' from the west and moving in the direction of Russia' will not serve Turkey's interest. Turkey's relations with Russia will be a plus only if they take place within the framework of Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy. It was rather interesting that Putin implied in his remarks that Turkey's EU membership would not please Russia."

"The Outcome of Putin's Visit"
Yilmaz Oztuna observed in the conservative-mass appeal "Turkiye" (12/8): "I would like to touch on a few political results of the Putin visit to Ankara. The visit was truly historic, both in terms of its timing and its agenda. Putin clearly signaled that Russia seeks an alliance with Turkey, especially against the US. Turkey's requests in the economic field were expressed to Putin, and he promised to look into Turkey's concerns. We consider even this promise

as a positive step. Turkey supports peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Russia agreed to warn Armenia to withdraw from Azeri territory. Turkey wants to become an EU member, but one that will have the best possible relations with Russia and the US. A country need not break off good relations that already exist in order to build new strategic relationships."

"As if the Truth Were not Enough"

Kursad Bumin wrote in the Islamist-oriented "Yeni Safak" (12/8): "Yesterday I wrote about Ambassador Eric Edelman's comments to Murat Yetkin at "Radikal," in which the Ambassador complained about certain stores near the Ankara castle barring the entry of American customers. In essence, I agree with the Ambassador. This is not an appropriate way to protest US policies. Not selling US goods in your store is one thing, but preventing customers of a particular nationality from entering smacks of discrimination. Today I wanted to address another of the Ambassador's concerns - recent statements critical of the US operation in Fallujah, some of which included the word 'genocide.' Foreign Minister Gul has said that the Government does not share the view that there is genocide in Iraq. The Minister's statement was on the mark. Do we have to use the word 'genocide' to explain and understand the evils of war? Isn't the reality of what is happening in Iraq enough for us? Everyone knows that using the word 'genocide' mixes things up. Remember how we Turks can never use the phrase 'Armenian genocide' without the qualifier 'so-called.' Think of the amount of ink we have used to explain why a 'forced deportation' that cost hundreds of thousands of Armenian lives should not be characterized as a 'genocide.' What I want to say is this: regardless of what is motivating our actions or what goal we are trying to achieve, in the long run it doesn't do any good to move beyond the truth to try to create a new reality."

EDELMAN